

# References 101

Stephen F. Austin State University | Center for Career and Professional Development

## Who should serve as your references?

When determining who to ask to serve as a reference, it is important to select people who can attest to your work-related qualities. Try your best not to ask people who only know you in a social setting (i.e. family and friends). While those people may have pleasant things to say about you, employers don't place value on those kinds of recommendations.

Type of reference	What they can say about you
Past & present employers	Your honesty, integrity, reliability, initiative, ability to grasp new concepts, willingness to take on responsibility, and work as part of a team – all valuable, transferable skills you can take with you to the new position
Faculty members	Your academic ability, productivity, punctuality, honesty, and integrity
Advisors & coaches	Your honesty, integrity, maturity, initiative, interpersonal skills, ability to work as part of a team, and leadership qualities

## Get permission from your references in advance!

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is listing someone as a reference without seeking their permission first. Reasons to contact an individual in advance:

- Confirm that individual remembers who you are
- Confirm that individual will speak favorably on your behalf
- Verify their contact information to ensure accurate information on your reference page
- Provide your reference a copy of your résumé so they can become familiar with other facets of your background
- If possible, give your reference a copy of the job description(s), so they can be better prepared to explain how you are a good fit for the position
- Encourage reference to mention: the capacity in which they know you, how long they've known you and positive qualities you've demonstrated (even better if they can relate them to the position you're applying for)

Maintain contact with references. Keep references posted on your job search progress and let them know names of employers who might be calling to ask about you. Remember your manners; write thank you letters to your references!

## What information to include on your reference page

Remember, information regarding your references should be listed on a separate page, NOT on your résumé! Most employers prefer to see 3-4 individuals listed as references. You should provide the same header as you did on your résumé complete with contact information. Maintain a consistent format; provide the same set of information on each reference:

- Full name
- Title
- Organization with which the person is affiliated
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- Email address

Always use proper salutation when naming a reference if he/she possesses a doctoral degree. Salutations such as "Mr." or "Ms." are not necessary, but may serve useful if gender is not obvious by name of the reference.

## When to provide your reference list to an employer

Supply your reference page to an employer when you are asked. Come to an interview prepared with several copies of your reference page. If you have reached the close of the interview and have not been asked for them, then you may offer this document. As a general rule of thumb, when sending out your résumé, do not accompany it with your reference page unless specified. Many employers don't contact references until after they have screened candidates.